



egypt

The ICRC promotes IHL and its incorporation into national legislation in Egypt and, through its cooperation with the Arab League, throughout the Arab world. It supports training in IHL organized by the authorities for the armed and security forces and for civilian and military magistrates and promotes the inclusion of IHL and related subjects in university and school curricula. These efforts are backed up by technical and academic support for implementation bodies, by the production and distribution of teaching materials and other dissemination tools, and by increasing local capacity, including that of the Egyptian Red Crescent Society, to teach IHL. Regional media communication is also carried out from Cairo. The ICRC has been in Egypt, with interruptions, since the beginning of the Second World War.

EXPENDITURE IN CHF

Protection

190,870

Assistance

22,504

Preventive action

1,247,250

Cooperation with National Societies

96,554

General

26,753

► **1,583,932**

of which: Overheads **96,672**

PERSONNEL

5 expatriates

28 national staff

KEY POINTS IN 2004

- The ICRC continued to work closely with the League of Arab States to promote the incorporation of IHL into the respective national legislations of Arab States.
- The ICRC conducted comparative studies in countries of the region to assess the compatibility of their respective national legislations with IHL and provided Arab governments and implementation bodies with IHL-related materials, including Arabic translations of IHL treaties.
- Progress was made towards integrating IHL into university and school curricula and into the training programmes of national armed and security forces in the region.
- ICRC travel documents were issued to refugees in Egypt seeking resettlement in third countries; refugees re-established contact with family members in their home countries through the RCM network, as did Egyptians with relatives detained/interned abroad.
- Cooperation was reinforced with the Egyptian Red Crescent Society to strengthen its capacity to deliver humanitarian services.
- ICRC emergency supplies were provided to thousands of Palestinians blocked on the Egyptian side of the border with Gaza by Israeli security restrictions.

CONTEXT

Egypt remained at the forefront of regional initiatives to restore peace in the Middle East, while pursuing efforts to crack down on domestic militant groups. It also introduced measures to reduce widespread unemployment and poverty through social reforms and economic development.

The Egyptian government and the Cairo-based League of Arab States worked closely with the international community to defuse tensions in the region generated by the conflict in Iraq and the Israeli-Palestinian crisis. Egyptian officials held talks with Palestinian militant leaders to try and secure their agreement on a ceasefire as a first step towards reviving the stalled roadmap peace process. Egypt also considered assuming a possible security maintenance role in Gaza should Israel carry out its declared plan to withdraw Israeli settlements and the troops that protect them from the territory in 2005. Elsewhere, Egypt endeavoured to find a peaceful solution to the Darfur crisis and sent humanitarian assistance to the region.

Significant numbers of refugees, mainly Sudanese and other African nationals fleeing war, internal violence and economic hardship in Horn of Africa countries, continued to enter Egypt seeking asylum, refugee status or resettlement in third countries.

Security was tightened following a series of almost simultaneous bomb attacks in October at three resorts on the Sinai Peninsula that killed at least 33 people and injured many others, including many Israeli tourists. It was the most serious attack in Egypt since the 1997 massacre of 58 tourists at Luxor.

ICRC ACTION

Egypt continued to be the focal point of ICRC activities to promote greater knowledge and acceptance of international humanitarian law (IHL) in countries of the Middle East and North Africa.

Working in close cooperation with the Cairo-based League of Arab States, the ICRC in Egypt reinforced its advocacy role aimed at persuading Egyptian and other Arab governments to accede to IHL instruments or to implement those already ratified. As part of this process, the ICRC's legal advisory service conducted comparative studies in a number of Arab countries to assess the compatibility of their national legislation with IHL. The findings will help governments to modify their respective legislations where appropriate. Legal advice was also provided on request to government legislative bodies in drafting model laws incorporating the main provisions of IHL.

Regional and national seminars on IHL coordinated from Cairo across the region helped to promote the integration of the subject into university and school curricula and into the theoretical and operational training programmes of national armed and security forces in Arab League member States.

In support of these activities, the ICRC's regional documentation and promotion centre in Cairo continued to produce written and audiovisual materials on IHL, including Arabic translations of IHL treaties, for distribution to governments and national implementation bodies. The ICRC's Cairo-based Arabic website was also widely consulted as a key reference source on IHL-related issues.

Cooperation was reinforced with the Egyptian Red Crescent Society to strengthen its capacity to deliver humanitarian services in accordance with the Fundamental Principles.

As in past years, the ICRC tracing and Red Cross message (RCM) service enabled Egyptians to restore and maintain contact with family members detained/interned abroad or living in countries affected by armed conflict. Refugees in Egypt were able to re-establish links with family members in their home countries by the same means. Furthermore, ICRC travel documents issued to asylum seekers and refugees – mainly nationals from countries in the Horn of Africa – facilitated their resettlement in third countries.

CIVILIANS

Aiding the resettlement of refugees

African nationals fleeing conflict or economic hardship in their home countries, mainly from Sudan and other countries in the Horn of Africa, continued to arrive in Egypt seeking asylum or refugee status. Those granted such status required travel documents in order to settle in third countries. The ICRC issued the documents in close coordination with UNHCR and the embassies of destination countries.

- ▶ ICRC travel documents issued to 6,333 mainly Sudanese nationals

Restoring family contacts

Refugees and asylum seekers in Egypt were able to re-establish and maintain contact with family members in their home countries through ICRC tracing work and the collection and distribution of RCMs, carried out either directly or in cooperation with the National Society. Links were also restored by the same means between families in Egypt and relatives either detained/interned abroad, or living in countries affected by war and internal violence, such as Iraq.

- ▶ 314 RCMs relayed between African refugees and asylum seekers in Egypt and family members in their home countries, and between Egyptian families and relatives either detained/interned abroad or located in conflict-affected countries

Assisting stranded Palestinians

Acting as a neutral intermediary, the ICRC continued to intercede with the Israeli authorities whenever security closures left Palestinians blocked in difficult circumstances on the Egyptian side of the border with Gaza. It also ensured that groups of Palestinians thus held up for lengthy periods received emergency assistance. When thousands of Palestinians were stranded at the border for nearly three weeks in the summer, the ICRC provided them with tents, food, hygiene items and ventilators through the Egyptian Red Crescent.

- ▶ some 3,000 Palestinians stranded for nearly three weeks on the Egyptian side of the border with Gaza received emergency shelter, food and other essential aid

PEOPLE DEPRIVED OF THEIR FREEDOM

Three ad hoc visits were made to an Egyptian national placed in detention following his release and transfer from the US Naval Station at Guantanamo Bay.

AUTHORITIES

The ICRC focused on implementing a plan of action agreed in 2001 by Arab League member States to incorporate IHL into national legislation. Countries that had not already done so were encouraged to create national IHL committees to accelerate the process.

The ICRC legal advisory service continued to offer expertise and IHL-related documentation in Arabic to governments and implementation bodies in the region. Studies to assess the compatibility of national legislation with IHL were undertaken at the request of individual governments.

A second progress report on the implementation of IHL in the 22 member States of the Arab League was published jointly with the Arab League. The report included a regional plan of action to speed up the implementation of IHL in these countries and the integration of the ICRC's Exploring Humanitarian Law programme in national education systems.

A draft law in Arabic on the 1998 Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC), based on a study conducted by the ICRC, was presented to Arab League members for initial review and then submitted to their governments for follow-up. Action was also undertaken to promote the ratification and implementation of the Ottawa Convention on the Prohibition of Anti-Personnel Mines, and the adoption of legislation to protect the emblem.

A conference was held in Cairo in February to mark the 50th anniversary of the 1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict. Organized jointly with the Arab League, UNESCO, the Egyptian national IHL committee and the ICRC, the meeting focused on measures to promote the ratification by Arab States of the Convention and its two Protocols.

A second regional seminar on IHL, organized with the Arab League and the Egyptian Ministry of Justice, was held in Cairo in January. Magistrates representing 11 Arab

countries and the Palestinian Authority discussed the legal implications of incorporating IHL into national legislation. In February, a third regional seminar on measures to reinforce IHL implementation mechanisms was organized by the same bodies for experts representing 15 Arab countries and the Palestinian Authority.

Experts from the Ministries of Education of 17 Arab countries and five National Societies attended the third regional seminar on the implementation of the Exploring Humanitarian Law programme organized by the Arab League, the Egyptian Ministry of Education and the ICRC from 27 November to 2 December. Debate centred on measures to accelerate the introduction of the programme into national education systems.

Seminars on IHL were held for hundreds of Egyptian deputy public prosecutors at the National Centre for Legal Studies. These followed several years of training in IHL for Egyptian civilian and military magistrates, as well as more recent training in the subject for members of the national IHL committee and parliamentary commissions responsible for drafting national legislation.

During talks in May with the Egyptian leadership and the Arab League Secretary General in Cairo, the ICRC president discussed Egypt's commitment to IHL and the humanitarian challenges currently faced by the ICRC in the Middle East and other parts of the world. The ICRC delegate general for the Middle East and North Africa also held talks with the Egyptian authorities during a visit to Cairo in June. Discussion centred on ICRC activities in the region and the reported possible role of Egypt should Israel implement its plan to remove its settlements and the troops protecting them from Gaza.

To promote national implementation of IHL, the ICRC:

- provided legal advisory services and IHL-related documentation in Arabic to governments and implementation bodies in the region;
- undertook studies to assess the compatibility of national legislation with IHL
- co-published with the Arab League a progress report on the implementation of IHL in Arab countries;
- submitted to Arab governments a draft law in Arabic on the ICC Statute and organized regional seminars on IHL in cooperation with the Egyptian authorities and the Arab League;
- held seminars on IHL for hundreds of Egyptian deputy public prosecutors.

ARMED FORCES AND OTHER BEARERS OF WEAPONS

IHL has become part of the training curricula of the main military education institutes and police institutes in Egypt following years of ICRC training in the subject for officers and instructors of the military and security forces. However, it has yet to be integrated systematically into operational training.

At the request of the military authorities, follow-up courses on IHL continued to be held for armed forces training instructors and for police commanders and officers, including prison, civil defence and military police staff.

CIVIL SOCIETY

Projecting an accurate image of the ICRC as an independent, neutral and impartial organization that carries out strictly humanitarian activities remained a top institutional priority. To this end, the ICRC broadened its contacts with media circles, Islamic institutions and groups, local non-governmental organizations and other influential sectors of civil society in Egypt and throughout the region.

Progress was made towards incorporating the Exploring Humanitarian Law programme into secondary-school curricula. By the end of 2004 the modules were being taught on a trial basis in 320 schools across Egypt, and five local training sessions had been organized in major Egyptian governorates for schoolteachers and inspectors likely to be involved in a planned future expansion of the programme.

Relations were consolidated with Egyptian universities to promote the teaching of IHL as a separate subject in their faculties of law.

NATIONAL SOCIETY

The Egyptian Red Crescent Society continued to support ICRC operations, notably in the Palestinian territories. It was also mobilized on several occasions to respond to the needs of large numbers of Palestinians stranded on the Egyptian side of the border with Gaza after Israel closed the Rafah crossing point for security reasons (see *Civilians*).

ICRC support contributed to strengthening the National Society's emergency-response capacity. The ICRC provided dummies to two of the Egyptian Red Crescent's first-aid

training centres, and various materials to be used for ERCS staff training were translated into Arabic. An Egyptian Red Crescent doctor participated in a three-week training course organized by H.E.L.P. (Health Emergencies in Large Populations) in Geneva. In addition, a training course in IHL was held for Red Crescent volunteers.

The National Society helped organize a meeting marking the 50th anniversary of the Hague Convention and a seminar for Arab experts in IHL both held in Cairo in February (see *Authorities*).

In May the ICRC president attended part of the 9th Conference of Mediterranean Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies in Cairo.